IN THE CLAIMS:

Please cancel Claim 4 without prejudice to or disclaimer of the subject matter presented therein. Please amend Claims 1, 5, 6, 9 and 20 as shown below. The claims, as pending in the subject application, read as follows:

1. (Currently Amended) A facing material comprising a plurality of flame resistive fibers and a filler,

wherein said plurality of flame resistive fibers ~~has a sheet-like shape~~ is formed in the shape of a sheet with first and second surface sides, ~~and~~

wherein said plurality of flame resistive fibers comprises:

a waterproofing layer formed by impregnating a portion of the first surface side with said ~~filler, and~~ filler; and

a flame resistive layer comprising a portion of the second surface side not impregnated with said filler, and

wherein a water-absorption preventing layer is provided on the second surface side.

2. (Original) The facing material according to claim 1, wherein said filler is a thermoplastic resin.

3. (Original) The facing material according to claim 1, wherein said waterproofing layer and said flame resistive layer are flexible.

4. (Cancelled)

5. (Currently Amended) The facing material according to ~~claim 4~~ claim 1, wherein said water-absorption preventing layer is provided at least in a peripheral portion of the second surface side.

6. (Currently Amended) The facing material according to ~~claim 4~~ claim 1, wherein the facing material overlaps with a plurality of facing materials such that the facing material has an unexposed region, which is a region where the first surface side is not exposed to the outside, and an exposed region, which is a region where the first surface side is exposed to the outside.

7. (Previously Presented) The facing material according to claim 6, wherein said water-absorption preventing layer is provided on a region of the second surface side which overlaps with one of the plurality of facing materials.

8. (Cancelled)

9. (Currently Amended) The facing material according to ~~claim 4~~ claim 1, wherein said water-absorption preventing layer is formed by impregnating said filler in a part of the second surface side.

10. (Original) The facing material according to claim 6, wherein said unexposed region has a fixing assistant means.

11. (Original) The facing material according to claim 10, wherein said fixing assistant means is a metal plate or a metal foil.

12. (Previously Presented) The facing material according to claim 6, wherein at least a part of the first surface side in said unexposed region has an adhesion means.

13. (Previously Presented) The facing material according to claim 6, wherein at least a part of the second surface side in said unexposed region has an adhesion means.

14. (Previously Presented) The facing material according to claim 1, wherein the first surface side has a surface protective layer.

15. (Original) The facing material according to claim 14, wherein said surface protective layer has a surface protective film.

16. (Original) The facing material according to claim 14, wherein said surface protective layer has a metal plate or metal foil.

17. (Previously Presented) The facing material according to claim 16, wherein said metal plate or said metal foil is sealed with said filler.

18. (Previously Presented) The facing material according to claim 6, wherein said surface protective layer is provided in a region other than at least a part of said unexposed region.

19. (Previously Presented) The facing material according to claim 6, wherein at least a part of the first surface side in said unexposed region has irregularities.

20. (Currently Amended) The facing material according to ~~claim 4~~ claim 1, wherein said water-absorption preventing layer has irregularities.

21. (Previously Presented) A method of storing the facing material according to claim 1, comprising:

winding the facing material in a longitudinal direction; and

transporting or storing the facing material in its wound state.

22. (Previously Presented) A method of storing the facing material according to claim 1, comprising:

stacking a plurality of facing materials such that the same surface of each of the plurality of facing materials faces the same direction; and

transporting or storing the stacked facing materials.

23. (Withdrawn) A manufacturing apparatus for the facing material according to claim 1, comprising a degassing means and a heating means, wherein a stacked body comprising a covering means made of flame resistive fibers and a sheet member of a thermoplastic resin is heated while degassing a space between the covering means and the sheet member to closely fix each other.

24. (Withdrawn) A manufacturing apparatus for the facing material according to claim 1, comprising a pressing means and a heating means, wherein a stacked body comprising a covering means made of flame resistive fibers and a thermoplastic resin is heated and pressed to closely contact each other.

25. (Withdrawn) A manufacturing method for the facing material according to claim 1, comprising stacking a covering means made of flame resistive fibers and a sheet member of a thermoplastic resin and heating them while degassing a space between the covering means and the sheet member to closely contact and fix each other.

26. (Withdrawn) A manufacturing method for the facing material according to claim 1, comprising arranging a covering means made of flame resistive fibers and a thermoplastic resin, heating, and pressing them to closely contact and fix each other.

27. (Withdrawn) A method for installing a facing material, comprising fixing the facing material to a roof substrate or an external wall by a fixing member, wherein said facing material is a facing material according to claim 1.

28. (Original) A construction comprising a facing material fixed to a roof substrate or an external wall by a fixing member, wherein said facing material is a facing material according to claim 1.

29 to 94. (Cancelled)